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CASTORIA

THE CAIRO BULLETIN, NEW YORK CITY.

The Mississippi Bubble

By EMERSON HOUGH

Author of "The Story of the Cowboy," "The Girl at the Halfway House," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOUS SAUVAGES.

Had nature indeed intended Law for the wild life of the trail, and had he indeed spent years rather than months among these unusual scenes, he could hardly have been better fitted for the part. Hardy of limb, keen of eye, tireless of foot, with a hand which any weapon fitted, his success as hunter made his companions willing enough to assign to him the chase of the bison or the stag, so that he became not only patron but provider for the camp.

Some weeks after the departure of Du Meane, Law was returning from the hunt some miles below the station. His tall and powerful figure, hardened by continued outdoor exercise, was scarce bowed by the weight of the wild buck which he bore across his shoulders. His eye, accustomed to the instant readiness demanded in the roving life, glanced keenly about, taking in each item of the scene, each movement of the little bird on the tree, the rustling of the grass where a rabbit started from its form, the whistling of the gray squirrel's tail on the limb far overhead.

The touch of autumn was now in the air. The leaves of the wild grapevine were falling. The oaks had donned garments of somber brown, the hickories had lost their leaves, while here and there along the river shores the

possessors, was in fact the most natural thing in the world. Indeed, could scarce have been avoided by anyone traveling with Indian guides down the waterway to the Mississippi.

The keen eyes of the red paddler caught sight of the crushed grasses at the little landing on the bayou bank, even as Law rose from his hiding place. A swift, concerted sweep of the paddles sent the boat circling out into midstream, and before Law knew it he was covered by half a dozen guns. He hardly noticed this. His own gun he left leaning against a tree, and his hand was thrown out high in front of him as he came on, calling out to those in the stream. He heard the command of the leader in the boat, and a moment later both canoes swung ashore.

"Have down your guns, Sir Arthur," cried Law, loudly and gaily. "We are none but friends here. Come in, and tell me that it is yourself, and not some miracle of mine eyes."

The young man so surprisingly addressed had started from the thwart in his amazement. His face bent into an incredulous frown, scarce carrying comprehension, even as he approached the shore. As he left the boat, for an instant Pembroke's hand was half extended in greeting, yet a swift change came over his countenance, and his body stiffened.

"Is it indeed you, Mr. Law?" he said. "I could not have believed myself so fortunate."

"This myself and no one else," replied Law. "But why this melodrama, Sir Arthur? Why reject my hand?"

"I have sworn to extend to you no hand but that bearing a weapon, Mr. Law," said Pembroke. "This may be an accident, but it seems to me the justice of God. Oh, you have run far, Mr. Law."

"What mean you, Sir Arthur?" exclaimed Law, his face assuming the dull red of anger. "I have gone where I pleased, and asked no man's leave for it, and I shall live as I please and ask no man's leave for that. I admit that it seems almost a miracle to meet you here, but come you one way or the other, you come best without riddles, and still better without threats."

"You are not armed," said Sir Arthur. He gazed at the bronzed figure before him, clad in fringed tunic and leggings of deer hide; at the belt with little knife and ax, at the gun which now rested in the hollow of his arm. Law himself laughed loudly.

"Why, as to that," said he, "I had thought myself well enough equipped. But as for a sword, 'tis true my hand is more familiar, these days, with the ax and gun."

"The late Jessemy Law shows change in his capacity of renegade," said Pembroke, rapidly. His face displayed a scorn which jumped ill with the nature of the man before him.

"I am what I am, Sir Arthur," said Law, "and what I was. And always at any man's service who is in search of what you call God's justice, or what I may call personal satisfaction. I doubt not we shall find my other friends in good order not far away. But meantime, before you turn my hospitality into shame, bring on your men and follow me."

His face working with emotion, Law turned away. He caught up the body of the dead buck, and raising it across his shoulders, strode up the winding pathway.

"Come, Gray, and Ellsworth," said Pembroke. "Get your men together. We shall see what there is to this."

At the summit of the river bluff Law awaited their arrival. He noted in silence the look of surprise which crossed Pembroke's face as at length they came into view of the little panorama of the ranch and the surroundings.

"This is my home, Sir Arthur," said he, simply. "These are my fields. And see, if I mistake not, yonder is some proof of the ability of my people to care for themselves."

He pointed to the gateway, from the loop-holes guarding which there might now be seen protruding two long dark barrels, leveled in the direction of the approaching party. There came a call from within the palisade, and the sound of men running to take their places along the wall. Law raised his hand and the barrels of the guns were lowered.

"This, then, is your hiding-place?" said Pembroke.

"I call it not such. 'Tis public to the world."

"Tush! You look not in the least of your old conceit and assurance, Mr. Law!" said Pembroke.

"Nay, I lack not so much in assurance of myself," said Law, "as in my patience, which I find Sir Arthur, now begins to grow a bit short about his head. But since the courtesy of the trail demands somewhat, I say to you, then, is my home. Enter it as friend if you like, but if not, come as you please. Did you indeed come bearing war, I should be obliged to signify to you, Sir Arthur, that you are my prisoner. You see my people."

"Sir," replied Sir Arthur, blindly. "I have vowed to find you no matter where you should go."

"I would seem that your vow is well fulfilled. But now, since you deal in mysteries, I shall even ask you definitely, Sir Arthur, who and what are you? Why do you come hither, and how shall we regard you?"

"I am, in the first place," said Sir Arthur, "messenger of my lord Belmont, governor at Albany of our English colonies. I add my chief errand, which has been to find Mr. Law, whom I would have to an accounting."

"Oh, granted," replied Law, flicking lightly at the cuff of his tunic, "yet

your errand still carries mystery. "You have at least heard of the Peace of Ryswick, I presume?"

"No, how should I? And why should I care?"

"None the less, the king of England and the king of France are no longer at war, nor are their colonies this side of the water. There are to be no more raids between the colonies of New England and New France. The Hurons are to give back their English prisoners, and the Iroquois are to return all their captives to the French. The Western tribes are to render up their prisoners also, be they French, English, Huron or Iroquois. The errand of carrying this news was offered to me. It agreed well enough with my own private purposes. I had tracked you, Mr. Law, to Montreal, lost you on the Richelieu, and was glad enough to take up this chance of finding you further to the West. And now, by the justice of heaven, as I have said, I have found you easily."

"And has Sir Arthur gone to sheriffing? Has my friend become constable? Is Sir Arthur a spy? Because, look you, this is not London, nor yet New France, nor Albany. This is a rule here, now, if kings, or constables, or even spies, wish to find John Law—why here is John Law. Now watch your people, and so you carefully here, else many follow which will be ill extinguished."

Pembroke flung down his sword upon the ground in front of him.

"You are lucky, Mr. Law," said he, "lucky as ever. But surely, never was man so eminently deserving of death as yourself."

"You do me very much honor, Sir Arthur," replied Law. "Here is your sword, sir. Stopping, he picked it up and handed it to the other. 'I did but ill if I refused to accord satisfaction to one bringing me such speech as that. 'Tis well you wear your weapons, Sir Arthur, since you come thus as emissary of the Great Peace! I know you for a gentleman, and I shall ask no parole of you to-night; but meantime, let us wait until to-morrow, when I promise you I shall be eager as yourself. Come! We can stand here guessing and talking no longer. I am weary of it.'"

They came now to the gate of the stockade, and there Pembroke stood for a moment in surprise and perplexity. He was not prepared to meet this dark-haired, wide-eyed girl, clad in native dress of skin, with tinkling metals at wrist and ankle, and on her feet the tiny, beaded shoes. For her part, Mary Conynge, filled with woman's curiosity, was yet less prepared for that which appeared before her—an apparition, as ran her first thought, come to 'hasten and affright."

"Sir Arthur!" she began, her trembling tongue but half forming the words. Her eyes stared in terror, and beneath her dark skin the blood shrank away and left her pale. She recoiled from him, her left hand carrying behind her instinctively the babe that lay on her arm.

Sir Arthur bowed, but found no word. He could only look questioningly at Law.

"Madam," said the latter, "Sir Arthur Pembroke journeys through as the messenger of Lord Belmont, governor at Albany, to spread peace among the Western tribes. He has by mere chance blundered upon our valley, and will delay over night. It seemed well you should be advised."

Mary Conynge, gray and pale, haggard and horrified, creasing all things and knowing nothing, found no manner of reply. Without a word she turned and fled back into the cabin.

Sir Arthur once more looked about him. Motioning to the others of the party to remain outside the gate, Law led him within the stockade. On one hand stood Pierre Noir, tall, silent, impassive as a statue, leaning upon his gun and fixing to the red coat of the English uniform an eye none too friendly. Jean Brebion, his place half ready and his volatile tongue half on the point of breaking over restraint, Law greeted with a gesture. Back of these, ranged in a silent yet watchful group, their weapons well in hand, stood numbers of the savage allies of this new war-lord, Pembroke turned to Law again.

"You are strongly stationed, sir; but I do not understand."

"It is my home."

"But yet—why?"

"As well this as any, where one leaves an old life and begins a new," said Law. "Tis as good a place as any if one would leave all behind, and if he would forget."

"And this—that is to say—madam?"

Sir Arthur stumbled in his speech. John Law looked him straight in the eye, a slow, and smile upon his face.

"Had we here the plank of poor La Salle his ship," said he, "we might call the message of that other renegade above our door—'Nous sommes tous sauvages!'"

(Continued Tomorrow.)

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ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Estate of James Kegan, deceased. The undersigned, having been appointed administrator of the estate of James Kegan, late of the county of Alexander and the state of Illinois, deceased, hereby gives notice that she will appear before the County Court of Alexander county, at the court house in Cairo, Ill., on the first Monday in February next, at which time all persons having claims against said estate are notified and requested to attend for the purpose of having the same adjusted. All persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to the undersigned.

Dated this 1st day of December, A. D. 1903. MARY ABRAM, Administrator.

CHANCERY NOTICE.

State of Illinois, Alexander County, ss.

In the Alexander County Circuit Court, February term A. D. 1904. In Chancery Siding, John Bell, complainant, vs. Joseph H. Wilson, Little Wilson, Milford G. Miller, Willie A. Miller and W. S. Starnes, defendants. Bill in Chancery for specific performance. The above named defendants are hereby notified that said complainant has this day filed in said court a certain bill in Chancery for specific performance against you, and that summons is issued thereon returnable on the first day of the next term of said court, to be held at the court house in Cairo, Illinois, on the eighth day of February next. L. E. B. DAVIS, Clerk. Cairo, Illinois, Dec. 31, A. D. 1903. DAVID W. KARRAKER, Complainant's Solicitor.

CHANCERY NOTICE.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, Alexander County, ss.

In the Alexander County Circuit Court, February term A. D. 1904. In Chancery Siding, Matilda Ford, complainant, vs. Lewis Ford, defendant. Bill in Chancery for divorce. The above named defendant is hereby notified that said complainant has this day filed in said court a certain bill in Chancery for divorce against you, and that summons is issued thereon returnable on the first day of the next term of said court, to be held at the court house in Cairo, Illinois, on the eighth day of February next. L. E. B. DAVIS, Clerk. Cairo, Illinois, Dec. 31, A. D. 1903. JOHN R. McKEE, Complainant's Solicitor.

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3:30 a. m. Chicago Daylight Express,

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